

Vernonia Flood Stories (continued from page 11)

Life In the Mods

For Vernonia High School (VHS) Students, daily life in the Mods (short for modular classrooms) is a life of resignation. It's not that bad, it could be better, it's good enough to get by, it's what they have to do.

"You miss the feeling of having a school to go to," said Genesis Castro, a VHS junior. "Kids took the old school for granted, but after the flood we really miss it. I don't think we're getting a real high school experience like a normal student does."

"The old building felt like more of a friendly place to be," said Codi Dyer, a sophomore. "It felt like a real school."

Complaints from students about their situation are limited-- they seem to understand their situation, and are dealing with it. "You have classes in the Mods and classes in the Middle School building, and you have to go back and forth," said Mariah Foote, a sophomore. "They did the best they could," said sophomore Brian Dotter, about the Mods.

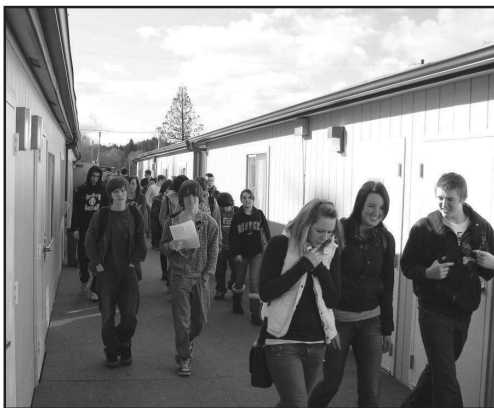
When asked what they miss or what they would change, there were the typical responses. "It's either super cold or super hot. And it's not very pretty to look at," said Genesis. "We had nice, big classrooms in the old building, and lockers," said Chantel Szlavich, a sophomore. "Lockers," said Brian. "Lockers," said Codi. "Inside hallways and a place to hang out," added Brian.

Having to walk outside in winter weather was another common complaint. "When it rains, we get wet," said Mariah bluntly.

Life in the Mods is not just hard on the kids. Students say that their teachers do a good job of keeping their frustrations about the situation to themselves, but they can tell it's hard on teachers too. "Some seem a little stressed," said Chantel. "They say they lost things in the flood, like years of education plans," noted Genesis. "They try not to complain," she added.

What do students think the future holds for Vernonia and a new school campus? "I think we should (build new schools), but it depends if we have the money," said Genesis. "I've heard a lot of different things about what's going on with the schools, so I don't really know what to think about it," said Codi.

"They're trying to fix it," said Mariah.



Vernonia school students between classes in the Mods

"I would like a school that feels like a real school community," added Codi as a final thought.

The NWRES-- The Unseen Heroes

One little-known story about help and support that the Vernonia community received during flood recovery is the story of the folks at the Northwest Regional Education Service District (NWRES). The NWRES provides special education support, instructional services and training for teachers and technology support to the twenty school districts in Clatsop, Columbia, Tillamook and Washington counties. According to Dana Hyde, who works in the library at VHS, they were the unsung heroes when it came to putting Vernonia schools back together. "There are numerous people at the ESD who spent their own time working behind the scenes to see that our schools had furniture, books, paper, everything we needed," said Hyde. "If a staff member asked for a need they would be the smiling faces who said; 'Of course, we'll see what we can do.' They were the stability-- the heart and soul that we needed during the chaotic times."

Andrea Keifer, who works at the NWRES's Regional Office in Hillsboro, was Vernonia's contact last winter and spring. She helped organize volunteers to process thousands of replacement textbooks, a task that took months to complete and saved hours of work on the Vernonia end.

Keifer also collected book donations from citizens, businesses, and organizations, which were donated to the school and public libraries in Vernonia. She even sold books online that she didn't think would be used in the library, and put the money into an account for Vernonia. Keifer told me a story about a second grade class in Reno, Nevada, whose teacher was originally from Seaside. "The teacher called and said they were starting a book collection for Vernonia," said Keifer. "She thought they might get a box or two. They ended up sending us a pallet of 4,000 books."

The NWRES not only helped Vernonia schools with books. They also helped replaced damaged and lost technology, helped transport all kinds of supplies and equipment, and collected donations on their own time to assist Vernonians with recovery. "People were so generous," said Keifer. "Every book and donation represented someone's good intentions to help the people of Vernonia."

Keifer pointed out that she wasn't the only staff member at the NWRES who went out of their way to help Vernonia. She mentioned Phil Sharp, Arlene Richardson and his Courier Department staff as a huge part of the effort, among others.

"We're very happy to step up and help," said Keifer. "It's what we do, serve our twenty districts."

For the Vernonia School District, after the Flood of 2007, the folks at the NWRES were real life savers.

Scouts Receive Flag From Senator Johnson

Vernonia Cub Scout Pack 201 received a wonderful gift from State Senator Betsy Johnson that will benefit the entire community. The presentation of an Oregon Honor Guard Flag was made by Vernonia Mayor Sally Harrison on behalf of Senator Johnson, who was unable to attend the Scout's Blue and Gold Banquet on February 20. The Blue and Gold Banquet was a celebration of local Cub Scout achievements, and a 150th Birthday party for Oregon.

Pack 201 has been raising money through a Penny Drive and other fundraisers, and has now raised enough money to purchase a full Honor Guard set of flags which will be used to lead parades in Vernonia. The Oregon State Flag, donated by the Senator will be part of that Honor Guard set.



Troop Leader Tom Ramsey and Vernonia Mayor Sally Harrison, show off the Oregon State Flag donated by State Senator Betsy Johnson.



The Vernonia Pioneer Museum received an upgrade with a new roof and gutters provided in part by funding from a State Historic Preservation Grant. Columbia County is sharing in providing for the renovations, and will be doing repairs to the buildings foundation in the near future. The building is on the National Register of Historic Buildings.

Vernonia Ambulance Seeks Volunteers

The Vernonia Volunteer Ambulance Association is seeking qualified volunteers. Interested individuals must have a clean driving record and criminal background, and must be twenty-one years old. For more information, call 503-429-4600 between 9:00 AM and 3:00 PM, Mondays-Fridays. EMT Scholarships may be possible for qualified candidates in the future.



Wauna Investment Services



Retired or Unemployed?

Questions About Retirement Plan Rollovers?

Ask Rich Parker, Financial Consultant 1.800.773.3236

There's a saying that if you have your health, you have everything. Well, that's not exactly true - without adequate resources, you could enjoy a long, healthy retirement at a far lower standard of living than you'd prefer!

When preparing for retirement, it's vital to keep in mind the importance of money to your quality of life during your "golden years." And with retirements now stretching as long as 20 to 30 years - and beyond - ensuring your retirement dollars outlive you is a paramount concern.

Rich Parker is a professional who can help you turn the complicated issues of retirement into a simplified process.

Securities and Insurance products offered through LPL Financial and its affiliates, Member FINRA/SIPC. LPL Financial is not affiliated with Wauna Federal Credit Union.

Not NCUA Insured

No Credit Union Guarantee

May Lose Value